

Caveats:

Didn't have TO

Didn't have budget for study

Didn't have data beforehand

Didn't interview some key people (e.g., residential providers; Child Welfare Consortium)

What we could gather by way of information was limited by whom we spoke with: may be gaps or over-represented views, along with under-represented ones as well.

## I. Substantive Program Issues

Goals: Safety, Child Well Being, Permanence

Hypotheses:

- A. Agency lacks accepted set of standards and norms of behavior
- B. Culture of Long Term Foster Care
- C. Culture of Deep End Placement (Over-diagnosis; therapeutic foster care, residential treatment) e.g., 10 year-old with AIDS
- D. Family Engagement Practice Weak
- E. Access to services for early intervention with families limited to collaboratives
- F. Very little front-end loading of services to expedite early reunification
- G. Visits to children in care more important than contact with families to support reunification
- H. Adoption parties—kids go to many aren't worked with beforehand
- I. Children are processed
- J. Adoptive families who advocate for themselves and children are seen as problematic
- K. Children coming into care age 8-11 routinely placed in group care
- L. Children coming into care age 6 and under routinely placed in St. Ann's
- M. Teen placements seen as routinely of poor quality
- N. Access to flexible funds on a reliable timely basis non existent

## II. Process Issues

Goals: Quick Hand-Offs, Efficiency; Clarity of Responsibility; Personal Ownership

By Staff of good outcomes for each child and family; Few in-and-out Boxes

Hypotheses:

- A. Hand-Offs are impersonal

- B. Hand-Offs occur through paper passing through numerous layers
- C. Hand-offs occur through cases "arriving" via FACES
- D. Meetings set up to support better decision making (at hand-off or disruption) are not happening routinely, if at all.
- E. Standards of practice are lacking (e.g., when cases should be opened)
- F. Some simple but required actions could begin to move the system (e.g., attorneys report that workers don't take notes of court orders)
- G. Court has overcompensated and is issuing too many and too specific orders.
- H. Some very long delays reported in hand-off from investigations to ongoing (May-Aug in truancy case; months waiting for a Spanish Speaking Worker)

### III. Structural Issues

Goals: Simplicity; Accountability; Personal Ownership; Minimizing In/Out Boxes; Building Ownership at All Levels for Good Outcomes for Families and Children

Hypotheses:

- A. Great distance from frontline to the Administration
- B. Very tight compartmentalization
- C. Powerlessness
- D. Lack of Clarity about very Basic Policies
- E. Collaboratives are not partners
- F. Private agencies are not partners
- G. Lack of geo-assignment hurts development of natural local partners, except in few areas where it is working well
- H. Therapeutic foster care contract system is severely flawed
- I. Split between program and administration (finance, esp) damaging credibility of program changes
- J. Caseloads for agency workers appear reasonable; openings are being filled in a timely manner
- K. Support for caregivers reported as much improved
- L. Many new staff learning their jobs
- M. Organizational structure of programs needs a complete overhaul
- N. Simple organizational structure needed to respond to out of state placement issue and to recruitment of DC families
- O. Attorney improvement
- P. Data availability improvement
- Q. Licensure issue leading to wasted effort or time.

## IV Summary Recommendations

### Policy

- Simplify, clarify, and issue in useful format current policy  
Immediate, short term, and long term
- Back up key policies with practice standards developed with staff and stakeholder input
- Use a pilot approach to deal with a particularly knotty problem—e.g., handoffs to collaboratives; handoffs from investigations to ongoing
- Clarify who has the power to make which decisions

### Management and Organizational Structure

- Recommend in moderate term an in-depth review of current structure with goal of simplifying and decreasing hand-offs. Intake/Investigations; Ongoing; Family Support Services; Placement Resources.
- Require meetings for all handoffs, starting with investigations-ongoing and all placement disruptions; make sure you have sufficient facilitation; develop policy, then make sure handoffs and placements cannot occur without meetings; use pilots to build these new systems; involve key people who will take part in them to design them, but with clear standards.
- Upgrade accountability systems; clarify them; make clear agency's need for key staff to let people know when standards are not being met; hold people accountable in every case, then cut down on sign-offs required.
- Flatten the organization
- Build ownership among staff doing the same work; beef up information sharing and problem solving across the agency, starting with workers, supervisors, and managers engaged in the same work.
- Develop a geo assignment system
- Deal with the Finance/Program split
- Have someone at CFS reporting to LL undertake programmatic responsibility for relations with collaboratives.

### Practice Systems

- Confront the licensure issue—develop and implement a skills/knowledge assessment that is fair and effective; begin to use it; then drop the need for a license.
- Assess the skill building nature of the training process; upgrade as necessary
- Involve all supervisors in skill building training—first as social workers; then as supervisors
- Take appropriate action with staff who cannot develop the skills necessary to do their work, starting with intensive work with supervisors

- Build a culture of safety and family permanence; from top down; deal with those who will not or cannot accept it.
- Focus additional attention on all teen issues, esp around the values associated with family permanence
- Assess causes of current situation; address barriers; within a time certain, discontinue the placement of children under six in any group setting
- Enhance ability of agency to place safely with relatives and foster families in emergency situations.